

IN THE MATTER OF THE	*	BEFORE THE ALCOHOLIC
APPLICATION OF ALI MAZHAR ZAIDI	*	BEVERAGE HEARING BOARD
AND BELEN YOCASTA LUEJE	*	FOR
ORTEGA ON BEHALF OF HGI, LLC	*	HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND
T/A HILTON GARDEN INN FOR A NEW	*	
CLASS B BEER, WINE, & LIQUOR	*	Case No.: 19-29
7-DAY ON-SALE LICENSE	*	

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### **DECISION AND ORDER**

The Board of License Commissioners for Howard County, Maryland (the "Liquor Board"), pursuant to Rule 1.02(A) of the Liquor Board Rules and Regulations, has delegated the authority to hear and decide cases to the Alcoholic Beverage Hearing Board for Howard County, Maryland (the "Hearing Board").

On June 11 and June 25, 2019, the Hearing Board heard the application of Ali Mazhar Zaidi and Belen Yocasta Lueje Ortega ("Applicants") on behalf of HGI, LLC t/a Hilton Garden Inn ("Hilton Garden Inn"), for a new Class B Beer, Wine, and Liquor, 7-day on-sale license for a 107,185-square foot hotel located at 8241 Snowden River Parkway, Columbia MD 21045.

The hearing was properly advertised and the property posted pursuant to the Alcoholic Beverages Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The Applicants were represented by Thomas Meachum, Esquire. There were no protestants who appeared in opposition to the application.

All the documents on file were incorporated into the record by reference.

The Board did not come to a decision at the June 11, 2019 hearing and continued the hearing to June 25, 2019 in order to allow Board Member Mary Bird to listen to the recording of the hearing in order to participate and to hear testimony from Mr. Mukesh

Majmudar.

### SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

**June 11, 2019:**

Ali Mazhar Zaidi, proposed resident agent and managing member of HGI, LLC, was sworn and testified that he has been a resident of Howard County for 12 years, is a registered voter, a 10% interest holder in HGI, LLC, which is the concessions entity for the Hilton Garden Inn. Mr. Zaidi testified that he works for the company that owns the Hilton Garden Inn and HGI, LLC will be the entity that is responsible for compliance with all liquor laws at the Hilton Garden Inn. He testified that he works full-time at another hotel, Homewood Suites in Laurel. Mr. Zaidi testified that alcohol is necessary as an accommodation for guests at Hilton Garden Inn and for banquet events and parties for local guests at the hotel.

Mr. Zaidi testified that he has read the Liquor Board rules and regulations, is alcohol awareness certified and that all employees will also be alcohol awareness certified. All employees will receive written policies concerning alcohol policies and they must read and sign that they have received them.

Mr. Zaidi testified that his role as managing member will be to make sure that all employees are certified and that they understand all laws and regulations while serving alcohol. He plans to be on site 2-3 times per month and will make sure that records are up-to-date, licenses are posted, alcohol awareness certificates are readily available if requested and that there is a manager on site who is alcohol awareness certified. Mr. Zaidi testified that he will be in communication with managers to make sure laws are being complied with and that he is made aware of all events scheduled at the hotel. He stated that he will speak to the managers before and after events to make sure everything went smoothly.

Belen Yocasta Lueje Ortega, general manager for Hilton Garden Inn and authorized person for HGI, LLC, was sworn and testified that she had previous experience in the hospitality business for nine years and will be on site eight to ten hours daily. Ms. Ortega testified that she is responsible for the day-to-day operations at Hilton Garden Inn and will make sure that all rules and regulations are complied with. She stated that she is alcohol awareness certified and that she has read the Liquor Board rules and regulations and will abide by them. Ms. Ortega testified that all employees will be alcohol awareness certified, that only patrons over 21 years of age will be served alcohol and that patrons will not be served if they are intoxicated.

Ms. Ortega testified that she was hired on March 1, 2019 and is familiar with the issues that this establishment experienced in the past. She stated that she has been general manager at other hotels and has worked for Star Global from 2009 until 2017, even though they did not have a liquor license. She testified that she has not previously worked for an establishment that had a liquor license. Ms. Ortega testified that her written employment contract is with Star Global.

Ms. Ortega testified that she will be responsible for ordering the alcohol for Hilton Garden Inn along with the food and beverage manager.

Shonda Carter, food and beverage director for Hilton Garden Inn, testified that she is not a licensee, however, she is part of the team to make sure all liquor laws are complied with. She testified that she has worked for Star Global Ventures since June of 2018 and feels empowered to take care of all aspects of the liquor license.

**June 25, 2019:**

As a preliminary matter, Mr. Meachum provided the Board with a copy of a partial

transcript of the March 26, 2019 hearing.

Mukesh Majmudar was sworn and testified before the Board.

Mr. Majmudar testified that he is involved in other hotels and businesses besides the Hilton Garden Inn, as well as strategic decisions and upper management decisions for many organizations. However, neither he nor Columbia Investors Group is authorized to act on behalf of HGI, LLC which will be operating the food and beverage component of the Hilton Garden Inn handling all alcohol related issues and regulations.

He testified that the Hilton franchise agreement requires every Hilton Garden Inn to have alcoholic beverage service.

The Following Exhibits were admitted into the record:

1. *Transcript of 3/26/19 hearing*
2. *Hilton franchise license agreement*
3. *Food and Beverage Excerpt from Hilton Manual*

Pursuant to Rule 6.13 of the Liquor Board Rules and Regulations, the Applicants waived their right to request the Liquor Board to hear the case.

Based on the evidence presented at the hearing, the Alcoholic Beverage Hearing Board makes the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law:

#### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Hearing Board finds that Ali Mazhar Zaidi and Belen Yocasta Lueje Ortega on behalf of HGI, LLC t/a Hilton Garden Inn have applied for a new Class B Beer, Wine, and Liquor, 7-day on-sale license for a 107,185-square foot hotel located at 8241 Snowden River Parkway, Columbia MD 21045.

2. The Hearing Board finds that the Applicants are fit and proper persons to

hold an alcoholic beverage license.

3. The Hearing Board finds that Ali Mazhar Zaidi has been a Howard County resident for more than two years, is a registered voter, and has a 10% interest in HGI, LLC.

4. The Hearing Board finds that the granting of the application is necessary for the accommodation of the public.

5. The Hearing Board finds that the granting of this application will not unduly disturb the peace and safety of the residents of the neighborhood.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. The Hearing Board concludes that Ali Mazhar Zaidi and Belen Yocasta Lueje Ortega on behalf of HGI, LLC t/a Hilton Garden Inn have applied for a new Class B Beer, Wine, and Liquor, 7-day on-sale license for a 107,185-square foot hotel located at 8241 Snowden River Parkway, Columbia MD 21045.

2. The Hearing Board concludes that the Applicants are fit and proper persons to hold an alcoholic beverage license.

3. The Hearing Board concludes that Ali Mazhar Zaidi meets the requirements of Rules 1.10(S), 1.10(T), and 2.06, of the Liquor Board Rules and Regulations concerning resident agent qualifications.

4. The Hearing Board concludes that the granting of the application is necessary for the accommodation of the public.

5. The Hearing Board concludes that the granting of this application would not unduly disturb the peace and safety of the neighborhood.

### **ORDER**

For the foregoing reasons, it is this 15<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2019, by the Alcoholic

Beverage Hearing Board of Howard County, **ORDERED**, that the application Ali Mazhar Zaidi and Belen Yocasta Lueje Ortega on behalf of HGI, LLC t/a Hilton Garden Inn for a new Class B Beer, Wine, and Liquor, 7-day on-sale license for a 107,185-square foot hotel located at 8241 Snowden River Parkway, Columbia MD 21045, be and the same is hereby **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) That the Applicants comply with all State and County laws and regulations; and
- (b) That the Applicants satisfy any requirements necessary to obtain the license by October 9, 2019, unless that deadline is extended by the Board upon good cause shown; and
- (c) Failure to comply with these conditions shall render this Proposed Decision and Order null and void.

ATTEST:

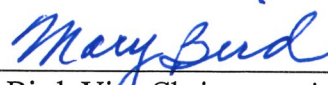
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE HEARING  
BOARD OF HOWARD COUNTY,  
MARYLAND



Robin Regner  
Board Administrator



Gene Ryan, Chairperson



Mary Bird, Vice Chairperson\*

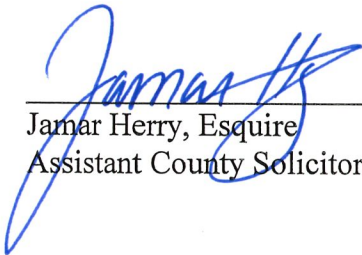
REVIEWED BY HOWARD COUNTY  
OFFICE OF LAW  
GARY W. KUC  
COUNTY SOLICITOR



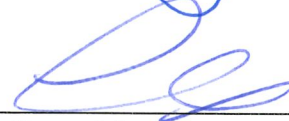
Harry Evans, Member



Heather Gaetano, Member



Jamar Herry, Esquire  
Assistant County Solicitor



Charley C. Sung, Member

\* THE ABOVE SIGNED BOARD MEMBER HEREBY CERTIFIES THAT SHE LISTENED TO A RECORDING OF THE PORTIONS OF THE HEARING FROM WHICH SHE WAS ABSENT AND HAS REVIEWED THE EVIDENCE OF RECORD PRIOR TO PARTICIPATING IN THE VOTE TO DECIDE THIS CASE.